

Who Saved the Parthenon?

A New History of the Acropolis
Before, During and After the
Greek Revolution



WILLIAM ST CLAIR



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Cover image: Figure 2.7. 'View of the Acropolis from the banks of the Illysus, Sep^r 1824.' Chromolithograph from a contemporary amateur picture. From: William Black, L.R.C.S.E., Surgeon, H.M.S. Chanticleer, *Narrative of Cruises in the Mediterranean in H.M.S. "Euryalus" and "Chanticleer" during the Greek War of Independence (1822–1826)* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1900), frontispiece. The chromolithograph was made by McLagan and Cumming of Edinburgh c.1900. Public domain.

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Appendix D

The Firman of 1826 and Other Primary Documents Relating to the Preservation of the Ancient Monuments of Athens Issued by the Ottoman Government

1. Stratford Canning to Foreign Secretary George Canning, His Cousin, in London, Constantinople, June 6th 1826¹

'Sir, It has been credibly reported to me within the last few days that the Seraskier of Roumelia, Reschid Pasha, who was lately engaged in cooperating with Ibrahim Pasha for the reduction of Missolonghi, has orders to direct his march against Athens, as soon as the necessary measures for refreshing and recruiting his army are completed, and that it is his intention on arriving there to demolish the monuments of antiquity which still adorn the Ancient Capital of Attica, under a fixed persuasion that these enduring records of the former glory of that Country contribute in a great degree to render the present generation of Greeks discontented with the Turkish Government.

Having the Honour to represent a Sovereign distinguished for his munificent and enlightened protection of the fine arts, I feel myself more particularly called upon to make an effort for the prevention, if possible, of so barbarous a design. With this view I have addressed a Letter, of which the inclosed is a Copy, to His Excellency the Seraskier,

1 Kew FO 78/142, 268.

accompanying it with a Copy of a letter written at Lord Strangford's request, soon after the Greek Insurrection broke out, by the Grand Vizir of the time, recommending the preservation of the antiquities at Athens to the Turkish Commanders.²

I apprize the Reis Efendi of this step; but in the present temper of the Turkish Government I do not expect to find any disposition in the Porte to repeat its former injunction in favour of an object, which has ever been viewed by Turks even of the higher class with contempt or at best with indifference.

I have the Honour to be with Truth and Respect, Sir, Your most obedient humble Servant, Stratford Canning.'

2. Stratford Canning to Reschid, then Seraskier (Ottoman Army Commander-in-Chief in Greece), 4 June 1826³

'Your late communication with the Ionian Islands affords me a motive for presenting my compliments to Your Excellency and expressing at the same time my persuasion that whenever you have applied to the British Authorities on subjects relating to the military operation in Greece, you have found them disposed to consider your demands with all possible attention, and to act, so far as the difficulties of the times would allow, in strict conformity with the friendly relations subsisting between our respective Sovereigns.

I am informed that the success which has attended Your Excellency's arms in the reduction of Missolonghi will be followed at an early period by an attack upon Athens. Should this be the case, the occupation of that Ancient and celebrated City by the Troops under Your Excellency's command will be only a natural and perhaps an immediate result of Your Excellency's combinations.

It is known to every one that the Citadel and suburbs of Athens contain the ruins of several antique edifices, which though of small importance in the eye of Reason or of Religion, and wholly unconnected with affairs of State, have justly fixed the admiration of mankind, as

2 The firman of 1821 transcribed and discussed in Appendix B.

3 Kew FO 352/15 B; and in FO 78/142.

works of consummate beauty and of perfect architectural skill. In the preservation of these buildings, which are so many memorials of the glory and magnanimity of the Turkish Sovereigns who spared them for the benefit of posterity, the Governments and Nations of Europe in friendship with the Sublime Porte, are known to take interest, regarding them as models in Architecture, whence many of the fairest monuments of the European Capitals have been derived.

In all armies of whatever Country or of whatever Religion, the common Soldiery is little capable of appreciating such objects; and in the operations of war but too frequently involve the sacrifice of whatever is most beautiful in nature or admirable in art. The conduct of an army is however dependent on the will of its Commander; and those Commanders who have established the highest and most enduring reputation for success in arms, have also been distinguished by their humanity, and by their endeavours to mitigate the horrors and destructive consequences of war.

When the Forces of the allied Monarchs took possession some few years ago of the Capital of France, they found in the centre of the City a column formed, in part, of the brass ordnance which had been taken from Austria in the preceding Campaigns, and designed to record the disasters of that Power. The Emperor of Austria acknowledged the merits of the monument and left it, uninjured, where it stood.

Your Excellency is not called upon to emulate this instance of magnanimity by sparing the monuments of Athens, as there is no feeling of National honour, which could suggest to you the idea of their destruction. My purpose in touching upon the subject is to obtain from Your Excellency a special and effective protection in favour of those magnificent remains, to the end that if Athens be attacked, all due precautions may be taken to secure them from violence and intentional injury.

Their preservation through the various events of the war will greatly redound to your Excellency's fame, and I am well convinced that no one will rejoice at it more than the Gracious Monarch whom I have the honour to serve as my Sovereign and Master.

I request Your Excellency to accept the assurances of my perfect consideration and esteem.'

3. Stratford Canning Reports his Success to the Foreign Secretary, 30 September 1826⁴

‘In one of my preceding dispatches I transmitted a copy of a letter which I had addressed to the Seraskier of Roumelia, who is now engaged in besieging the Acropolis of Athens, for the purpose of prevailing on His Excellency to spare, and to protect, as far as the necessities of his Military operations would allow, the remains of Antiquity still existing in that Citadel and in its immediate vicinity.

I have now the honour to inclose a translation of the answer which I received only a few days ago from the Seraskier, who is perhaps not the less sincere in his promise to pay attention to my request for the project in which he is known by means of an intercepted letter to entertain (notwithstanding some difficulties in its execution) of mining the Acropolis and blowing up Ghoura and the Greek garrison together with the magnificent Temple founded on the same rock.

I have the honour to be with truth and regard, Sir, your most obedient humble servant Stratford Canning.’

4. Copy of Reschid’s Letter of Reply to Canning, Received in Constantinople c.25 September 1826

‘[After the ordinary Compliments]. I have received the friendly Letter sent by you requesting me to endeavour to preserve the remains of Antiquity, the objects of the admiration of the World, existing in the Castle of Athens, which might be destroyed in the attack which I am charged to make to wrest it from the hands of the Rebels.

I have fully understood the purport of your request and feel great satisfaction for this mark of friendship shewn by you.

It is known to you that for some years past the Greek Nation, insensible to the benefits of the mercy and compassion exhibited towards them by their Sovereign and the Sublime Porte, have been in open rebellion, and it would have been easy to destroy them. Nevertheless in spite of the enormity of their guilt, the Sublime Porte (the Benefactress of the World) has hitherto shewn every mark of mercy and kindness towards the Rayas [loyal non-Muslims].

4 Kew FO 78/145, 101.

I have shut my eyes as far as possible to the guilt and excesses of the aforesaid Rebels, and far from destroying them with the sword of Power, I have endeavoured to gain their hearts by clemency — And marks of benevolence have again and again been shewn to them on my part to induce them to return to the state of Rayas of the Porte.

It is well known to me that the city of Athens is an ancient and celebrated place, containing admirable works of arts, and though I had previously taken measures to save them from destruction, having received Instructions to that effect, yet on the receipt of your friendly letter I repeated my orders that these monuments may be preserved from injury.

It is however known to you that in the present war carried on against obstinate and frantic Rebels, they may take refuge in some of the aforesaid Monuments and there fortify themselves; in which case I shall be under the necessity of employing violence against them, but even in this case I will endeavour to preserve the aforesaid Monuments.

The contents of this letter being made known to you, I hope that you will bear me in remembrance, and from time to time give me marks of your friendship. LS [signed with a seal] Mehemmed Resid.'

5. Reschid to Count Guilleminot, French Ambassador, 19 August 1826⁵

'We have received your letter of friendship that was sent concerning the request that, as the citadel of Athens is a very old and ancient place and contains many ancient and skilfully made monuments [*nice asar-ı kadime-i-musanna'a*], we should defend and protect it so that it is not destroyed as a result of warfare; and the contents of your request and petition having been understood and received, I have been pleased beyond limit by your observance of the application of the usages of friendship and of respect. For the sake of your friendship and in compliance with your friendly letter and request, special men have been assigned so that care

5 A document in the Ottoman archives, translated into English, with some further phrases also given in modern Latin alphabet Turkish, by Eldem: Eldem, Edhem, 'From Blissful Indifference to Anguished Concern: Ottoman Perceptions of Antiquities, 1799–1869' in Bahrani, Zinab; Çelik, Zeynep; and Eldem, Edhem, *Scramble for the Past, A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul 2011), 308; a photograph of the document is at 306.

and attention be given to prevent the ancient monuments from being destroyed in any way. Ungrateful for the many kindnesses and favors manifested by the Imperial Sultanate, the Greek nation [*millet*] which has brandished the flag of revolt and rebellion for so many years, has now declared war, and although it is a matter of little consequence that I should, as a result of my duties and thanks to imperial power, destroy and annihilate those who are besieged in Athens, as well as the others, the great compassion and kindness of the eternal Sublime State for the destitute being evident, despite all their misdeeds, they will still be offered a proposal of mercy and pardon and are being given a sign of permission to ask for mercy. Yet you see how the conflict goes, and as the Greeks lack intelligence and comprehension, by entrenching themselves in such an artistic and beautiful place [*o missill ü bir musanna ve güzel mahal*], in the end they will cause their own destruction together with those beautiful things [*güzel şeyler*]. But whatever happens, for the sake of your friendship, orders and warnings have been given to the relevant persons so that the ancient monuments be protected and safeguarded in every way, and this letter of permanent friendship has been written and sent to let you know this and to enquire about your well-being.'

6. Reschid to the Ottoman Government, 23 August 1826⁶

[*After describing his military operations and praising his troops*] 'In short as this citadel of Athens is greatly loved and respected both by the infidel Greeks and by the Franks, they have all forcibly pledged to sacrifice their lives for it, as Your servant has been able to verify through the observations and reports of the Muslim spies I have sent out to all places held by the rebels, as well as from the declarations and warnings of non-Muslims bound by the collar of subjection. One of the tactics that has been revealed is precisely this battle, which has taken place exactly in this way; and in the hope of implementing the stratagem they had devised in order to gain some more time, General Rini Armiral, one of the respected generals of the Frankish State [*the French Admiral de Rigny, in command of the French naval squadron*], came on board a special

6 *ibid.*, 309. A photograph of the document is at 307.

Frankish man-of-war, and in a letter sent to your servant by their head ambassador at the Abode of Felicity by way of the said general, it was requested that as the citadel of Athens was a very old and ancient place, with many ancient monuments [*nice asar-ı kadime*] it should not be destroyed due to the war, and the said general also proposed verbally to give great amounts of money in order to take from the surroundings of the citadel the stones [*taşlar*] that were in the ancient monasteries. It was answered to the said general that thanks to His Majesty the ruler of the world there was no lack of money, and that no matter of this kind had ever been touched upon to this day, and a copy was made of the letter we have sent to the said ambassador [*in response*], and in order to submit to Your Highness the nature of their request, the said ambassador's letter was attached to it and sent and presented at the foot of my Lord and benefactor as an annex of my present petition.'

7. Notes on the Monuments of Athens by the Grand Vizier and by Sultan Mahmoud II⁷

Reschid was reporting what he had done rather than seeking prior approval, but the summary prepared by the Grand Vizier, Benderli Mehmed Selim Sirri Pasha, when the report was submitted to the Sultan, reveals how insulted the Ottoman leadership were, in word at least, by the importance that France and Britain were giving to the old stones, which were rapidly becoming a symbol round which the Greek revolutionaries and Western powers were uniting, and simultaneously laying the groundwork for the legitimacy of a future Greek state as a new Hellas.⁸

8. Extract from the Summary by the Grand Vizier, Undated

'The 'head ambassador' [*Canning*] when [he] had previously informed the office of the Reis Efendi [*foreign minister*] through his dragoman that he would send one of his men for the stones in Athens [*a reference to the mission of Captain Hamilton, noted below*] knowing that on the other

7 As discussed and translated by Eldem: *ibid.*, 309–11

8 As concluded also by Eldem: *ibid.*, 310, 311.

hand Athens was a place that belonged to the well-protected domains of the Sublime State, and that a group of evildoers from among the non-Muslim subjects were entrenched in it and that officers had been appointed and sent in order to subject them to the punishments that they deserved, it was answered that it was completely inappropriate that the ambassador should have sent one of his men to prevent the ancient works of Athens being destroyed, and that even taking this into consideration was inappropriate; but due to the viciousness of his character, the said ambassador was insolent enough to send one of his men all the same.'

Despite the Grand Vizier's apparent irritation at Canning's having gone under the heads of the central Ottoman Government and dealt directly with the field commander, Reschid's report was approved by the Sultan, including the words, as translated by Professor Eldem:

'and may it be penned and written that the answer he has written to the ambassador of England is appropriate and has been approved.' As Professor Eldem explains, the Grand Vizier had misinterpreted a phrase about the 'head ambassador.'⁹

9. Report of James Emerson, Who Was in Athens in July 1825, in a Book Published Early in 1826¹⁰

'The Turks have declared their intention of destroying them totally, should they again gain possession of Athens; since they deem their presence serves to keep alive the spirit of the Greeks, whilst they excite a feeling of sympathy for their fate in the breasts of Europeans.'

⁹ *ibid.* 310.

¹⁰ Emerson, James, *et al.*, *A Picture of Greece in 1825* (London, 1826), i, 282. Some of the other reports that the Ottoman forces intended to destroy the monuments may derive from this book.

10. Stratford Canning tells Captain Hamilton,
Commander of the British Naval Squadron, that He
Has in Mind to Try to Buy What Remained of the
Frieze of the Parthenon and of the Caryatids from the
Greek Revolutionaries If They Choose to Destroy the
Buildings as an Act of Immolation, 11 June 1826¹¹

'Private & Confidential. Constantinople June 11th 1826

To purchase, if in danger, some of the ruins at Athens.

My dear Sir,

If what I hear of Gouras' surliness and of Reschid Pasha's barbarous intentions are true, the temples at Athens have a fair chance of being demolished before the summer is over. If the Pasha were bent on their destruction in spite of my appeal to his feelings, he might perhaps be inclined, in case of his getting possession of Athens, to turn a penny by the Ruins which he would not consent to efface in their present condition.

In this event the danger of being despised with the Goths and the Elgins of other times would not deter me from offering to become a purchaser of the Caryatides and of the reliefs which still remain on the Parthenon. I had thoughts of sending a person thither for the specific purpose of ascertaining the Pasha's intentions, & effecting the object in view if the temples were to be overthrown; but the difficulty of finding a person properly qualified for the purpose has restrained me; and I think it best to mention my wishes to you, and to leave it to your discretion, on ascertaining more particularly the state of things, to offer a negotiation with the Pasha. It is not impossible that you may be able to select a proper person at Smyrna or elsewhere who might not only be sent up with my letter to the Pasha, but who might also be entrusted with a communication to sound him as to his disposition to enter into an arrangement with me — on the supposition always that the temples are in imminent danger of being destroyed or greatly injured by him.

11 Kew FO 352/15A/3, fol. 407. I note with thanks that I was alerted to the existence of this letter by James Beresford.

You could, perhaps, also favour me with your opinion at some leisure moment as to the most advisable mode of getting away any objects of magnitude which I might eventually succeed in obtaining.

At the same time that I confide to you my views and wishes on this subject, I feel that I am writing in the dark, and at the risk of engaging your assistance in a communication which you cannot by any means assist me in executing. I must, however, take my chance, counting on your indulgence and zeal. With respect to the letter, I reckon, at all events, on your being able to go to Athens on the way to Hydra & Napoli di Romania. Yours sincerely [signed]'

The letter confirms that Canning saw little wrong in removing antiquities that were lying on the ground, dug up, or were built into walls. It was he who later arranged the firmans for the removal of pieces from the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. But he jibbed at removals from the building — except in extremis. The same thought is in his 1832 letter to his wife below. Canning shows himself in part at least as a follower of the western romantic aesthetic that sees the pieces as autonomous 'works of art'. It is, in my view, only by coincidence that he applies what appears to have been the Ottoman discourse of the 1801 firman given to Elgin that allowed for the removal of detached pieces but not explicitly pieces that still were parts of the building.¹²

II. The Greek Forces Besieged in the Acropolis in 1826–1827 Threaten to Destroy the Ancient Monuments as Part of a Last Stand

i. Makriyannis's Advice to Gouras During the Siege, Undated, But Well Before 12 October 1826¹³

Translation from the French, perhaps translated from the Greek.

'Proclamation of General Gouras and the Senators of Athens, 10 July 1826.

¹² See Appendix A

¹³ *The Memoirs of General Makriyannis 1797–1864* (Oxford 1966), 110. Gouras was killed in the night of 12–13 October (Finlay, George, *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time* (Oxford 1877), vi, 403).

Charged as we all are with the defence of the sacred city of Athens, it is our duty to address first our fervent prayers to the Almighty, that he see fit to crown our efforts, and to proclaim, in the presence of God, before Greece and before civilised Europe, the feelings with which we are penetrated and which animate us for the cause which we have embraced.

The recent example of valour and patriotism, Missolonghi, will be our model. Therefore as long as we have food and ammunition, as long as our strong arms can handle the cutting sword of vengeance, we will fight with the enthusiasm given by the three great protectors of Greece: religion, patriotism, and freedom.

But if God abandons his children, if our fellow-countrymen fail to help, if Europe is content with her role as spectator, then, and we call as witnesses the very men that we have called on for help, then death, as we make a sortie from the debris of the Propylaia, will bury us under the ruins of the Parthenon, of the temples of Neptune and of Erechtheus.

Signed by the patriot Gouras and the Senators of Athens. Athens, 10 July 1826.'

For a report of Reschid threatening an Ottoman self-immolation if a nation-state were to be established see 'A letter from William Meyer, British Consul in Preveza, western Greece, 12 April 1828, addressed to the Secretary to the British High Commissioner, in the Ionian Islands protectorate, transcribed in Appendix E.

ii. The Commanders Receive a Desperate Plea from the Leaders of Those Besieged in the Acropolis, Undated

In this despatch (April 11/23) [1827], after reproaching the Greek commanders with want of good faith in not sooner coming to their rescue, the leaders of the garrison concluded: This is our last letter; we will wait five days longer, and we can hold out no more ... Our nature is like that of all men; we can suffer no more than others. We are neither angels nor workers of miracles to raise the dead or do impossible things. If any evil should happen we are not to blame, nor has God to condemn us in anything. This document was signed by seven 'patriots' and confirmed by Colonel Fabvier.¹⁴

¹⁴ Lane-Poole, Stanley, *Sir Richard Church* (London, 1890), 51.

The letter implies that the besieged only had enough supplies to hang on for another five days, although even for the number crowded on the Acropolis summit there was food, water, and weaponry for at least three months and probably much longer.

iii. Address to the Greek Troops by Admiral Lord Cochrane, Commander-in-Chief of the Greek Navy, Before the Disastrous Attempt by Greek Forces to Relieve the Siege of the Acropolis, Translated from the Greek, Date Uncertain¹⁵

‘Greeks!

Your most dangerous enemy Discord has been overcome. What remains for you to do is easy. The youth of Greece runs from every side to arms. The fate of the Acropolis is no longer doubtful. The besiegers are in their turn besieged. The transport of provisions is interrupted; the passes are occupied; retreat is impossible. The freedom of the classic soil of Athens is thus at length secured. Once more the arts and sciences will flourish

Greeks! Having attained this end lay not aside your arms so long as the ferocious Turk occupies one foot of that sacred ground which was your Fathers. Let a noble emulation inspire the maritime Youth and the Heroes of the continent, let them hasten in crowds to man the national marine. If then you obtain not independence and all your rights, let us enchain the Hellespont and carry the war into the dominions of the enemy. Then will the misanthropic Sultan, the unjust cutthroat of his subjects, the insatiable murderer of your countrymen be assailed by his own people; [*sic?*]

The Musulman[‘s?] arms will be turned against him; the banner of the cross will once more wave from the walls of Saint Sophia. The Greek nation will have laws, the towns will rise again from their ruins and the glory of the time to come will rival that of times gone by. Think not, however, Oh Greeks, that your country will be free unless all of you run to Her assistance and defense.

from on board the Greek Ship the ‘Hellas’ [signed] Cochrane, Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of the Greek naval Forces — ’

¹⁵ Kew FO 78/153 201.

iv. The Order to Surrender

After the defeat of the attempt to raise the siege, a 'mediation' was arranged by the French Admiral de Rigny. When it was clear that the situation of those in the Acropolis was hopeless, it was decided to accept the Seraskier's proposal. There were two letters, both of which mention saving the monuments as one of two justifications. The first, sent on 12 May 1827, is known from General Church's own English-language copy.

v. General Richard Church, Commander-in-Chief of the Greek forces, 'to the general and officers commanding the Greek troops in the Acropolis of Athens', 12 May 1827¹⁶

'Through the intervention of the Commander of His Most Christian Majesty's frigate La Junon H.E. the Seraskier offers the enclosed capitulation which is guaranteed by the same French Commanding Officer. As there are numbers of helpless persons shut up in the Acropolis, and as the monuments of antient Greece are dear to the civilized world I wish their preservation from the destructive effects of war — I have therefore authorised your acceptance of the Capitulation proposed if it is such as you approve of — You will let me know immediately by your decision therefore, that vessels may be got ready to embark you — Your defence has been high and honourable. I have &&& RC'

This letter, that puts the onus of deciding on the garrison, appears to have been rejected. The leaders let it be known that they would not surrender, unless they were specifically ordered to do so. This led to a second letter being sent on the same day.

vi. General Church Orders a Capitulation¹⁷

Translation from the French

'Order of General Church to the Besieged. From the camp at Phaleron, 3 April/12 May 1827

¹⁶ Church papers. BL Add. ms. 36551, fol. 10.

¹⁷ Kew FO 78/155 138. Part of the letter is quoted by Jurien, ii, 134. Noted also by Jourdain ii, 355.

By the intervention of the Commander of His Most Catholic Majesty's ship, the Juno, the Seraskier has offered the attached capitulation under the guarantee of the said French Commander, seeing that weak people are shut up in the Acropolis.

Considering that the monuments of ancient Greece so dear to the civilised world are there too, and desiring that they should be saved from the destruction of War, I order you to agree to the surrender set out below, being sure that the Commander of the fleet has taken all the necessary measures for your security.

General-in-chief [signed] R. Church

To the Commander and all the chiefs of the Garrison of the Acropolis of Athens.'

12. Secret Letter from Stratford Canning to Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston, 9 August 1832, Marking the Start of a Radical Shift in British Policy from Unofficial Support for the Greeks to Active Support for the Ottoman Empire Against Egypt, Nominally a Province of the Empire, and Russia¹⁸

Canning's letter was sent when Ottoman forces were still occupying the Acropolis and the territories of Attica and of Negropont [modern and ancient Chalcis and Euboea], including their naval base [Chalcis] and main line of communication with Constantinople.

'Decypher. Therapia, 9th August 1832. Separate and Secret

My Lord, Direct proposals to form an Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey has recently been made to me, by the Reis Effendi, and, subsequently, by the Sultan Himself. The Turkish Government feeling the want of support from Christendom, and now that the Greek question is settled, place more confidence in Great Britain than in any other European Power. Their immediate object is the submission of the Pacha of Egypt, & they would be glad to procure the moral, and, still

¹⁸ Kew FO 78/211, 285.

more, the physical aid of England for that purpose. They offer to make arrangements for giving any reasonable advantage to England in return. I could not refuse to submit these proposals to His Majesty's Government; but I have declared, that I cannot answer for more than their general friendly disposition towards the Porte, as I am without instructions on the subject. I feel, at the same time, that the Turkish Empire is in a most dangerous predicament, and that those Powers whose interests are at all involved in its fate should lose no time in adopting towards it a steady systematic course of policy in one sense or the other.

The Russian negotiation is now coming on; it will doubtless meet with serious difficulties; and the mere chance of a favourable answer from London will in all probability keep the Porte for a time out of the arms of that [left blank].

As I hope to have an early opportunity of communicating verbally with your Lordship, I reserve till then a more complete explanation of this very important overture. I have etc. [signed] Stratford Canning'

13. Stratford Canning to his Wife: Personal Remarks on the Monuments and Lord Elgin, Dated from Athens 16 January 1832¹⁹

'The great temple of Minerva [*Parthenon*] on the summit of the citadel, is indeed a wonder; not so much for the ingenuity of its construction, as for the combination of massiveness and elegance, the beauty of the marble, and the exquisite finish of the reliefs. You are aware that the most beautiful of these are in London, and do not tell L.B. [*Louisa Bruce, niece of Lord Elgin*] on any account [so underlined] how nobly indignant I felt against her noble uncle [*Lord Elgin*] for having spoiled the temple of its finest ornaments. I had taken his part a few years before, on the ground of his having intended to forestall the French, then masters of Egypt and threatening Greece; but when I heard that one whole side

19 Extract from a letter published in Lane-Poole, Stanley, *The Life of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe*, K.G. (London, 1888), i, 501. The later 'popular' edition omitted these remarks. As far as I can discover, the manuscript of the letter has not survived. Although printed, this letter has not hitherto been noticed in histories of the monument or of the marbles. An incomplete letter from Louisa Bruce in Kew FO 352/19B, part 7, mentions 'uncle Elgin'.

of the reliefs was, and still is, buried under the ruins, occasioned by an explosion of gunpowder many years ago, I could not help thinking that the Scottish Earl might have better employed his time and money in fishing these up, than in pulling down those reliefs that were still in their place.'